United Nations CRPD/C/OMN/Q/1/Add.1

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
2 January 2018
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic and English only

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Nineteenth session
14 February–9 March 2018
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35

List of issues in relation to the initial report of Oman

Addendum

Replies of Oman to the list of issues*

[Date received: 19 December 2017]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Replies of the Sultanate of Oman to the list of issues in relation to its initial report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

A. Purpose and general obligations (arts. 1–4)

Reply to paragraph 1

1. Reference was made in the core document to the legal status of international agreements and treaties, which is defined in the Basic Law of the State. Accordingly, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has force of law in the Sultanate of Oman.

2. Oman pursues a policy of support and empowerment for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the Basic Law of the State, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 101/1996. In fact, article 12 of the Basic Law deals with social principles and its subparagraph (1) states: "Justice, equality and equal opportunity for the Omani people are the pillars of society as a whole and are guaranteed by the State." Under article 12 (4), the State is to provide all citizens with assistance in case of illness or infirmity, within the social security system, while article 12 (5) guarantees the right to preventive and curative public health care, in accordance with rules established by law. According to article 12 (6), all citizens have the right to work, in accordance with their own desires and abilities, within the limits of the law. Those and other social principles, which constitute both the legal foundations and the prevailing values of society, are applied in all dealings with Omani persons with disabilities. Such persons are part of national society, which they are moulded by and which they themselves mould, and they enjoy equality with non-disabled citizens. These provisions are largely in line with the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

3. In general terms, the Basic Law of the State guarantees all human-rights-related rights and freedoms, first among them equality, non-discrimination and others of the eight principles, as well as the rights consecrated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Basic Law employs the term "citizens" in order to cover all groups within society, including persons with disabilities. On that basis, the provisions of the Convention can be accommodated and implemented under the Basic Law of the State. The Basic Law sets forth the rights and duties of Omani citizens in various different areas such as the right not to suffer discrimination of any kind, freedom of expression and assembly, the right to participate in political decision-making, the right to private property, the right to individual privacy, freedom of religion and equality between the sexes.

4. Some of the articles of the Basic Law of the State that refer to those rights and freedoms are summarized below:

- Article 9 states: "Governance in the Sultanate shall be based on justice, consultation and equality. In accordance with this Basic Law and with the conditions and circumstances set forth in the law, citizens shall have the right to participate in public affairs";
- Article 10 deals with political principles and its subparagraph (4) states: "A sound administrative system shall be established, such as to guarantee justice, tranquillity and equality for citizens, and to maintain public order and protect the supreme interests of the State";
- In article 12, which deals with social principles, legislators covered a number of issues related to rights that affect citizens' lives, including the following:
    - Justice, equality and equal opportunity for the Omani people are the pillars of society as a whole and are guaranteed by the State;
    - The family is the foundation of society and the law shall regulate the means for protecting it, preserving its legal existence, strengthening its ties and

values, caring for its members and creating conditions conducive to the development of their aptitudes and capacities;

- The State shall assist citizens and their families in cases of emergency, illness, incapacity and old age, within the social security system. It shall seek to promote social solidarity in shouldering the burdens resulting from disasters and public calamities;
- The State shall care for public health through the prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics. It shall endeavour to provide health care for all citizens and encourage the establishment of private hospitals, clinics and other medical institutions under State supervision, in accordance with rules established by law. Likewise, the State shall work to preserve, protect and prevent the contamination of the environment;
- The State shall enact laws to protect the employee and the employer and regulate relations between them. All citizens have the right to engage in the work of their choice, within the limits of the law. It is not permitted to impose compulsory labour upon anyone save in accordance with the law and for the performance of public service, and for a fair wage;
- Public office is a national service entrusted to those who hold it and State employees, in performing their functions, shall pursue the public interest and seek to serve society. Citizens are equal in respect of occupying public positions, according to the provisions of the law.

5. The Basic Law of the State also guarantees various public rights and freedoms, including the following:

- Article 17: "All citizens are equal before the law and in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, confession, domicile or social status";
- Article 18: "Personal freedom is guaranteed by law. No person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned, or have his or her residence or movement curtailed, except in accordance with the law";
- Article 25: "The right to take legal action is safeguarded and guaranteed for all people. The law defines the procedures and circumstances required for the exercise of that right and the State guarantees, as far as possible, to make judicial offices accessible to the litigants and to settle cases promptly";
- Article 26: "Medical experiments or operations may not be performed on anyone without his or her freely-given consent";
- Article 29: "Freedom of opinion and of verbal, written and other forms of expression is guaranteed, subject to the limits laid down by law";
- Article 30: "Freedom of correspondence by post, telegraph, telephone and other means of communication is protected and its confidentiality guaranteed. Such correspondence may not be monitored, searched, disclosed, delayed or confiscated except in cases specified by law and in accordance with the procedures stated therein";
- Article 33: "Freedom to form associations at a national level, for legitimate purposes, using peaceful means and such as do not conflict with the objectives of this Basic Law is guaranteed, in accordance with the conditions and circumstances set forth in the law. It is forbidden to form associations the activities of which are adverse to the order of society, secret associations or associations of a military nature. No one may be compelled to join an association".

6. Subsequent provisions cover other rights and freedoms of citizens, including those of persons with disabilities.

Reply to paragraph 2

(a)

7. The Ministry of Social Development is currently working on a new bill for persons with disabilities that incorporates the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so as to ensure that those provisions are duly applied within the context of domestic law.

8. The competent national authorities, in particular the Ministry of Legal Affairs, are careful to review bills, regulations and decrees before they are promulgated and published in the Official Gazette in order to ensure that they are consistent with the Basic Law of the State as well as with the treaties and agreements to which Oman has acceded.

9. In recognition of the fact that persons with disabilities have the right to receive care and to live a dignified life, Oman ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under Royal Decree No. 121/2008, thereby making it part of domestic law. The Convention ensures a rights-based approach and an appropriate social perspective in the provision of services to persons with disabilities, and the Government has taken effective steps towards promoting and strengthening the rights of such persons by issuing the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 63/2008. Under the Act, the Government is obliged to provide protection, care and habilitation for persons with disabilities in general, including children. The Act, which was promulgated in the same year as that in which Oman ratified the Convention, states that "the term 'person with disabilities' means a 'disabled' person who is affected by an impairment in his or her sensory, physical or intellectual faculties which is congenital or stems from a genetic factor, disease or accident and which limits that person's ability to play their natural role in life compared to others of the same age, such that the person requires care and habilitation in order to function".

(b)

10. The provisions of the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act are general provisions that cover all persons with disabilities: men and women, children and older persons. It is hoped that this issue will be addressed in the new bill, which is currently in the process of being drafted and which, reflecting the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, will have a greater focus on the rights of women and children with disabilities. Furthermore, according to article 51 of the Children's Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, children with disabilities enjoy all the rights stipulated under the Act without any discrimination in regard of their disability.

(c)

11. Oman allocates resources of all kinds — personnel, materials, finances and time — across a number of ministries and departments for the integration of persons with disabilities. They include the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Information, the Oman Human Rights Commission, the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the Omani Public Authority for Radio and Television, etc. The following resources have been directly allocated by the Ministry of Social Development to services for persons with disabilities: 759 staff members with different areas of expertise were assigned to work in the Directorate General for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities and 32,150,243 Omani rials (RO) were allocated in the period 2014–2017. In terms of material resources, a number of buildings as well as government and private facilities have been built and equipped, while transportation vehicles and assistive devices have been purchased.

Reply to paragraph 3

12. The legislative process for adopting laws and regulations (concrete mechanisms) is based on consultation. Both persons with disabilities and civil society participate in drafting laws, which are then submitted to the competent authority (the National Committee for the

Care of Persons with Disabilities) before being referred to the Council of Oman (Consultative Council and the State Council) and the Council of Ministers.

13. Children with disabilities also share in the process. By participating in public days and forums on the rights of persons with disabilities, they are able to express their views and to make proposals concerning legislation, programmes and measures that affect them. Such events are organized annually or periodically by the Ministry of Social Development and other ministries involved in the protection of children with disabilities.

14. Thanks to programmes and activities organized by the Ministry of Social Development, Omani women's associations and other civil society groups active in the field of disability, women with disabilities are able to participate in discussion mechanisms on matters related to their rights and to legislative and administrative processes that affect them.

Reply to paragraph 4

15. The bodies responsible for following up on human-rights-related issues periodically review international treaties and agreements, and their relevant protocols, and consider the possibility of acceding thereto. Those bodies seek to lay the foundations and launch the preliminary processes for accession to treaties, before such accession can take place.

B. Specific rights (arts. 5–30)

Equality and non-discrimination (art. 5)

Reply to paragraph 5

16. Steps have been taken to raise awareness about the concept of reasonable accommodation and to incorporate it into regulations affecting governmental and civil institutions operating in the field of disability.

17. There is an initiative to disseminate a building code for the new Muscat International Airport.

18. In cooperation with civil society institutions, the Ministry of Social Development is providing housing assistance in the form of furnishings and electrical appliances, and it is collaborating with the private sector in the construction of housing.

19. The building code is being implemented and engineers working in municipalities and regions — Muscat, Sohar and Dhofar — are being trained in how to apply it.

20. Article 6 in part two of the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act makes provision for the supply of equipment and the development of measures to create an inclusive and accommodating environment. This includes the adaptation of environmental and social conditions and communication vectors, and the provision of assistive equipment, tools and devices to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights and freedoms on an equal footing with others. If accessibility is lacking, the Act provides for reasonable temporary measures or modifications to accommodate persons with disabilities until full accessibility is achieved, in order to enable them to enjoy and exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. Furthermore, the Act imposes adherence to building specifications in order to enable persons with disabilities to benefit from the public services they need, and it requires that public transport should be such as to facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities at airports, ports, on the roads and elsewhere.

21. Article 9 of the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act states as follows: "Government departments and employers employing 50 or more workers are required to take on a proportion of qualified persons with disabilities to fill vacant positions. Those persons are designated by the Ministry of Manpower on the basis of the national manpower register." Article 17 of the Labour Code, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 35/2003, states: "Employers employing 50 or more workers are required to take on professionally qualified persons with disabilities designated by the competent office for

jobs appropriate to their condition. The proportion of such persons shall be decided by ministerial decree. Persons with disabilities who have been employed in accordance with the provisions of the previous paragraph enjoy the same rights as other workers." In the public sector, the Civil Service Council, at its sitting No. 1 held on 15 February 2009, decided that at least 1 per cent of announced vacancies must, for a period of three years, be filled by persons with disabilities. That proportion was later re-evaluated to 2 per cent. Moreover, any person with a disability may compete for any advertised post and anyone employed under the provisions of this article enjoys the same rights and privileges as other employees.

22. Article 11 of the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act states as follows: "Departments concerned with social, sporting and cultural activities must facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in sports meetings and events at the local, regional and international levels, and provide means for the cultural enrichment of such persons."

23. Persons with disabilities are exempt from taxes on residential land and they benefit from a variety of government housing programmes.

24. Domestic law places no barriers in the way of government action to facilitate support for the rights of persons with disabilities. Such persons have the right to compete for jobs alongside others, without restrictions, commensurate with the nature and conditions of the post.

25. Generally speaking, discrimination does not constitute an issue in Oman and the Public Prosecution Service — which is the judicial body responsible for investigating and taking action against all criminal acts — has never received any allegations in that regard.

Reply to paragraph 6

26. The Oman Human Rights Commission has received four reports. One concerned the fact that the central prison was not adapted in such a way as to allow prisoners with disabilities to move around; another focused on the lack of habilitation for persons with autism spectrum disorders, who are classified as persons with disabilities by the Ministry of Social Development. The Commission also studied a number of suggestions submitted by persons with disabilities: one was a demand that the employment proportion of 2 per cent for persons with disabilities be raised in order to provide them with more varied job openings, while another focused on difficulties in accessing service facilities for their disability.

27. The Ministry of Social Development provides follow-up through the Family Protection Department and the child protection committees, which were set up to safeguard children who are exposed to violence, including children with disabilities. It has also formulated preventive, remedial and treatment plans and programmes in collaboration with other competent bodies. The membership of each of the 11 child protection committees distributed among all the country's governorates includes a number of representatives from bodies involved in child protection, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Public Prosecution Service and the Royal Oman Police.

Women with disabilities (art. 6)

Reply to paragraph 7

28. Oman is eager to disseminate a general culture of human rights and, in particular, to make people aware of the rights of persons with disabilities, women and children. In that regard, the Ministry of Social Development — which is the government body responsible for women's matters in Oman — has made major strides in the areas of awareness-raising, education and the adoption of a human rights perspective. One way in which the Ministry has helped to raise awareness about women's rights has been by organizing various programmes, conferences and seminars at the national level. It has also issued memorandums explaining the means of judicial redress available to women who may have suffered a violation of any of their legal rights, thus making them aware of the channels and procedures for recourse to the courts where they can demand those rights.

29. Civil society institutions also work effectively to safeguard the rights of women and girls with disabilities. For example, in 2017, the Oman Women's Association in Seeb collaborated with the Oman Journalists' Association to organize awareness-raising programmes to review and explain the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to raise women's awareness about their rights under that instrument. The Oman Human Rights Commission also organizes activities and training workshops on human-rights-related issues.

30. Efforts are currently under way to evaluate the impact of development programmes, including information programmes targeting women. The Ministry of Social Development has adopted a dual-track approach. Firstly, it has sought to promote legal knowledge among women through awareness-raising programmes explaining the rights and duties of women in domestic legislation and in the international treaties that have been ratified or acceded to by Oman. Secondly, it has launched a marriage and family guidance programme that explains the principles of marital relations, the sound upbringing of children, equal treatment between spouses, the rights of each party in the marital relationship, cooperation mechanisms and the complementarity of the roles of the two spouses.

31. Oman is also continuing its efforts to highlight the effective role that women play in society and in political and public life.

32. Violence is not such a phenomenon in Oman as to require a special law on violence against women or the incorporation of disability as a defining factor. National legislation covers actions that constitute offences against persons with disabilities, and it is applied to men and women alike. In fact, article 17 of the Basic Law of the State provides as follows: "All citizens are equal before the law and in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, confession, domicile or social status." Article 25 of the Basic Law reads: "The right to take legal action is safeguarded and guaranteed for all people. The law defines the procedures and circumstances required for the exercise of that right and the State guarantees, as far as possible, to make judicial offices accessible to the litigants and to settle cases promptly."

Reply to paragraph 8

(a)

33. All government bodies in Oman work to eliminate violence against women and girls, including human trafficking. To that end, a number of specialized agencies have been created, such as the Oman Human Rights Commission. In addition, the Family Protection Department of the Ministry of Social Development accepts complaints, which are referred to it by the competent offices, concerning cases of violence or ill-treatment against women and girls, without discrimination on the grounds of disability. There is also a shelter home called "Harmony House" where victims can be kept separate from the source of the violence or ill-treatment. There their physical and mental integrity can be guaranteed, they can be protected and can receive well-planned psychological, social and legal support under the supervision of competent staff.

34. Legal training and education has been disseminated through courses held in schools, television and radio programmes, and articles published in local newspapers. Brochures on promoting a culture that protects the rights of women and girls have been drafted and distributed to governmental and non-governmental organizations.

35. On 17 January 2017, the Ministry of Social Development opened the toll-free telephone line 1100 for reporting cases of ill-treatment against women and girls. A service offering guidance and referral to component ministries and departments, in case of need, has also been made available.

36. With reference to the steps envisaged to enact a new law on combating violence against women, the Criminal Code, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/74, includes a number of provisions that punish indecent assault. Article 218 states as follows: "Any person who has intercourse with an unmarried female without her consent, be it through coercion, threats or subterfuge; or who abducts a person using the same means with the intent of committing fornication; or who commits fornication with a person under the age

of 15 or with a person who has a physical or intellectual deficiency, even if the act occurs without coercion, threats or subterfuge or if the perpetrator is a parent or guardian of the victim, or has power over the victim, or is a servant of the victim, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of between 5 and 15 years." In chapter VI of the Criminal Code, which refers to crimes against individuals, articles 247–249 criminalize assault, abuse and battery.

37. The Anti-Human Trafficking Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 126/2008, makes any form of trafficking in women a crime. Article 1 of the Act defines criminal exploitation as "the illicit employment of a person, including prostitution, any form of sexual exploitation, serfdom, forced labour, enslavement or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the illegal removal of organs." The perpetrators of such acts face criminal penalties while the victims receive legal protection. The legal rights of victims are defined in a language they can understand and they are given an opportunity to explain their legal, physical, psychological and social status. A victim in need of specific care or housing is referred to the competent authorities and placed in a medical or psychiatric rehabilitation facility, a care facility or a designated residential centre. If necessary, victims and witnesses receive protection and — by order of the Public Prosecution Service or the courts, depending upon the case — they are allowed to remain in Oman if that is necessary for the purposes of an investigation or a trial.

38. According to article 9 of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act: "Human trafficking shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of between 7 and 15 years and by a fine of between RO 10,000 and RO 100,000 in any of the following cases: if the victim is a juvenile or a person with special needs; if the perpetrator is the spouse, or a relative or guardian of the victim or has authority over him or her."

(b)

39. Oman believes that domestic and sexual violence does not currently constitute such a phenomenon that it needs to be regulated under a separate law. Existing legislation should be sufficient to deter, prosecute, and punish perpetrators of such offences. Persons who have suffered sexual violence are treated as victims and the State guarantees all the procedures necessary for the defence of their rights and the punishment of offenders. Moreover, under Royal Decree No. 72/2001, Oman repealed article 252 of the Criminal Code, according to which a man who killed or injured his wife, mother, sister or daughter after having surprised her while she was committing a dishonourable act was liable to receive a reduced penalty or to be exempted from punishment altogether.

Children with disabilities (art. 7)

Reply to paragraph 9

40. The Child First Association, which is based in the governorate of Muscat, was proclaimed by Ministerial Decree No. 177/2009 on 11 October 2009. It is a charitable, voluntary, non-profit organization and currently has 102 members.

41. In the period 2016–2017, the Association carried out various activities related to child protection, child rearing and the role of the family in safeguarding children from violence and ill-treatment.

42. The Association was also involved in numerous community outreach forums and it participated in the Social Week (annex 1).

Reply to paragraph 10

43. The Children's Act devotes an entire section to the rights of children with disabilities. The chapter, which covers three main subject areas, intends to ensure that rights may be enjoyed without discrimination on the grounds of disability. Under the Act, the State must ensure that care and habilitation is available for a child with disabilities, while the State and the guardian must seek to empower the child to access care and habilitation services. The Act also includes provision for the State to conduct studies and research into

disability with a view to planning and to raising awareness about, and tackling, the problems associated with disability.

44. The overarching provisions of the Act stipulate protection for children in general, including those with disabilities, from violence and ill-treatment.

45. The treatment and criminal responsibility of children who are delinquent or exposed to delinquency are regulated under the Act on Juvenile Accountability.

46. With regard to protection measures, a number of activities are prohibited under the Act. They include:

- Enforcedly recruiting children into the armed forces or armed groups, or directly involving them in combat activities;
- Abducting or selling children; removing their organs; raping, sexually assaulting or sexually harassing children; driving or coercing children to participate in any form of sexual activity; exploiting children in prostitution or other sexual acts; involving children in pornography;
- Employing children in the slave trade, subjecting them to serfdom or forced labour;
- Selling tobacco, alcohol or psychotropic substances to children, or exploiting children in places where such products are manufactured, sold or advertised.

47. In addition to prohibiting the above offences, the Act also lays emphasis on rehabilitation and therapy, and it requires State institutions to facilitate in every possible way the rehabilitation and social reintegration of child victims of any form of violence, exploitation or ill-treatment.

48. The Act contains provision for the following child protection mechanisms:

(a) Child protection committees: In order to implement the provisions of the Act, the members of these committees for the protection of children from violence, exploitation and ill-treatment are vested with the powers of criminal investigation officers. The committees are empowered to receive complaints and reports concerning any violation of children's rights or incidents in which children have been subjected to violence, exploitation or ill-treatment. Under the terms of the Act, anyone has the right to report such violations or incidents and the committees have a legal obligation to take all necessary measures to protect and conceal the identity of informants;

(b) Temporary shelters: Any child victim of violence, exploitation or ill-treatment may be placed in a temporary shelter by order of the Public Prosecution Service on the basis of a recommendation from a child protection officer. A child in respect of whom such an order has been issued may be released into the custody of his or her guardian when there is no longer any justifiable cause for such placement, provided that the guardian has given a written undertaking to care for the child;

(c) Child protection officer: The official appointed to monitor child victims of violence, exploitation or ill-treatment and to intervene when they are in need of protection.

49. With a view to ensuring the enjoyment of these rights, an entire section of the Act is devoted to penalties and civil damages with the proviso that they must not be prejudicial to any heavier penalty prescribed in other legislation. The Act sets the levels of these penalties and civil damages in a manner consistent with the gravity of the offence and the harm suffered by the child, in order to act as a deterrent against the commission of any offences detrimental to children's rights.

Awareness-raising (art. 8)

Reply to paragraph 11

50. Through eight representative organizations — the Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Impairments, the Association for the Care of Disabled Children, the Noor Association for the Blind, the Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Omani Autism Association, the Omani Down Syndrome Association, the Association for Early

Intervention for Children with Disabilities and the Omani Special Olympics Association — persons with disabilities are involved and participate in awareness-raising campaigns on causes of disability, prevention methods and cooperation with partners at a national level. They also participate effectively in the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the Arab Day of the Disabled as well as festivals, theatrical performances, conferences and seminars on disability (annex 2).

Reply to paragraph 12

51. Oman continuously monitors the emergence of any stereotypes, prejudices or harmful practices that may affect persons with disabilities. One such practice is the abuse and neglect of children with autism spectrum disorders and, in that regard, the State has consulted and engaged with civil society with a view to establishing a special association for such children and to giving it the resources necessary to help them.

52. The social development committees have been given governorate-level rapid intervention prerogatives to tackle any harmful practices against persons with disabilities.

53. A committee "for receiving reports" has been created within the Oman Human Rights Commission. It is responsible for studying reports and examining ways to resolve the issues involved.

54. Article 20 of the Children's Act states as follows: "All persons, particularly doctors, nurses and guardians, are prohibited from undertaking, participating in or promoting traditional practices harmful to children." What constitutes a traditional practice harmful to children is set forth in regulations. It is incumbent upon the Ministry of Health to take the measures necessary to raise awareness about the dangers of such harmful practices.

Reply to paragraph 13

55. The media play an important role in communicating with persons with disabilities by drawing attention to existing services, highlighting the challenges such persons face in society, and underscoring successful experiences and models in different areas of life. At a conference on the rights of persons with disabilities to culture and sports, held in Tunisia in October 2017, the Omani Ministry of Information received an honourable mention for the efforts it has made through the media to alter stereotypes about persons with disabilities.

56. The media — be it radio, television, newspapers or other media — are the most effective way to deliver information and to raise awareness among the public. Oman is eager to support persons with disabilities and has established a number of habilitation centres for them, while the national media seek to educate citizens about the important role of persons with disabilities and their contribution to the nation and to the cultural and educational structure of society. One example of the media's role in advertising the skills and capacities of persons with disabilities is the student Laith bin Ishaq al-Kindi, who has a sight impairment. An Arabic-language specialist from the College of Arts and Social Sciences of the Sultan Qaboos University, he recently won second place in the twenty-fourth Egyptian Global Qur'an Competition, held in April 2017, where he was able to triumph over a large group of opponents and to memorize the whole of the Noble Qur'an, including an exegesis of the verses. The Omani media were quick to publicize his success, which was also recorded in the 228-page annual "Oman 2017", published by the Ministry of Information.

57. The media also help to explain the abilities and achievements of persons with disabilities through awareness-raising and education. Working with disability organizations, the Ministry of Information has developed awareness-raising programmes, which have been disseminated across numerous media and other outlets: television, radio, cinema, other media platforms, theatre, advertising hoardings, modules in school curricula, mosque pulpits, etc.

Accessibility (art. 9)

Reply to paragraph 14

58. Oman has formulated a strategic plan to create a barrier-free society. The Social Action Strategy 2016–2025 includes a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities, the aim of which is to impact development by ensuring that "persons with disabilities of both sexes and all ages can enjoy all their rights and participate effectively in society". The Strategy thus aims to eliminate or reduce barriers so that persons with disabilities may enjoy their rights to the full and to strike a balance between inclusion strategies and public policy. The objective is to support persons with disabilities in accordance with their needs and to integrate and involve them in all aspects of society and development.

59. According to the Strategy's guidelines, unilateral action to provide persons with disabilities with quality services will not lead to them participating as desired in Omani society. Therefore, it is necessary to work in parallel, on the one hand to provide services that empower them and, on the other, to remove barriers that prevent them from taking part in development programmes. Thus, this dual-pronged approach involves both empowering persons with disabilities and taking account of disability in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all public policies and programmes.

60. Various efforts have been made by the Government and groups involved with persons with disabilities to create a barrier-free society, including the following:

- Omani Air applies a 50 per cent discount on the basic cost of a ticket for a person with a disability and a single companion;
- There are special parking areas and ramps to facilitate the access of persons with disabilities to airport buildings;
- Passengers with disabilities are provided with guidance free of charge in the form of special signs and the support of a ground services agent;
- Special prices are offered on audio and video calls, text messages and high-speed mobile Internet services;
- Tickets for the transportation of blind persons within Oman are free of charge and their companions are given a 35 per cent discount;
- Personal documents can be issued even in the absence of the person concerned;
- Airports are equipped with wheelchairs and have departments to serve persons with disabilities;
- Persons with disabilities are given priority in bureaucratic transactions and are exempt from the automated queuing system;
- Persons with disabilities are issued with a special driving licence;
- A special service window has been set up where persons with disabilities can carry out motor vehicle-related transactions;
- Special parking areas and access points are available on request for persons with disabilities at driving licence departments and motor vehicle registration departments, as well as at other government offices, shopping centres, etc.
- Bureaucratic transactions have been facilitated though a one-stop-shop system;
- School buildings have been equipped to accommodate children with motorial disabilities both by modifying entranceways and by providing general facilities;
- Digital access policies for 2012 focused on the usability of products, information and services related to communications and information technology by persons with disabilities on a par with others;
- The Information Technology Authority runs courses for persons with disabilities on the use of computer- and Internet-based assistive technologies;

- Technical support and training are provided to various entities on how to produce and deliver information accessibly;
- Health services are available to citizens and residents alike and may be accessed without difficulty, while health institutions are located throughout the country within easy reach of everyone, without exception. In addition health institutions, particularly the modern ones, are designed to be disability friendly and to enable the access of persons with disabilities. As regards deaf persons there are plans, which were postponed until the ninth five-year plan, to teach sign language to medical personnel. Disability standards and procedures are being reviewed with a view to producing a comprehensive guide for persons who operate in that sector;
- Facilities in health-care institutions are consistent with the provisions of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and are in line with ministerial decrees regarding persons with disabilities;
- Building designs for health-care institutions such as primary health-care centres, health-care complexes, specialist hospitals, dialysis clinics and other health-related facilities must include the following:
    - Special parking areas for persons with disabilities close to the entrance;
    - Specially designed ramps, consistent with international standards;
    - Wheelchairs for use by persons with disabilities in waiting areas and at the entrances;
    - Railings to help persons with disabilities walk independently; the railings must be coloured in such a way as to facilitate their use by persons with visual disabilities;
    - Toilets for persons with disabilities, consistent with international standards;
    - Corridors with a minimum width of 1.8 metres to allow persons with disabilities to walk easily and manoeuvre around bends;
    - Coloured strips to guide persons with visual disabilities;
    - Braille lettering in lifts to help persons with visual disabilities;
    - Coloured signs on doors to help persons with visual impairments;
    - Non-slip floor coverings to prevent patients or persons with disabilities from falling as they move around health-care institutions;
    - Continual cleaning to ensure that no substance accidentally spilt might cause people to slip and fall;
    - Doors and openings with a minimum width of 90 cm to facilitate the access of wheelchair users;
    - Special hoists for persons with disabilities.

61. The organizational framework of the Ministry of Health was updated under Ministerial Decree No. 67/2015, dated 7 June 2015. A new "Disability Programmes Section" has been created within the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases of the Directorate General for Primary Health Care. The Section is responsible for:

- Developing a programme and policies on how to deal with persons with disabilities in primary care and the mechanisms for referring them to other institutions;
- Drafting then monitoring the implementation of health-care plans for persons with disabilities;
- Monitoring the functioning of the primary health-care services provided to persons with disabilities across the governorates;
- Undertaking studies and research in the field with a view to developing the health-care services available to persons with disabilities, in collaboration with the competent authorities;

- Coordinating with other sectors to develop health-care services for persons with disabilities;
- Developing and imparting disability training to staff in primary health-care centres.

Right to life (art. 10)

Reply to paragraph 15

62. The Children's Act affords overarching protection to children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment, including honour crimes and the killing of a child by its mother. In fact, an entire section of the Act is devoted to protecting children and it includes the following provisions:

- A ban on abducting or selling children; removing their organs; raping, sexually assaulting or sexually harassing children; driving or coercing children to participate in any form of sexual activity; exploiting children in prostitution or other sexual acts; involving children in pornography. These provisions also apply to health-care institutions and any incidents of that nature are to be reported immediately to the police. It should be noted, moreover, that there is a very strict system in place following childbirth under which both baby and mother are protected and cared for within the health-care institution until they are allowed to leave;
- A ban on employing children in the slave trade, subjecting them to serfdom or forced labour;
- A ban on selling tobacco, alcohol or psychotropic substances to children, or exploiting children in places where such products are manufactured, sold or advertised.

63. Murder in general is outlawed under articles 235, 236 and 237 of the Criminal Code. Each case is considered in its own right, depending on the particular circumstances and the outcome of the investigations. The killing of a child by its mother would come under article 239 of the Code, which states: "A mother who, to avoid shame, kills a child conceived out of wedlock shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 3 years." However, statistics show that there have been only five cases in Oman where a mother killed her own offspring and none of them were related to disability (annex 3).

64. As stated above, there is a toll-free telephone line, 1100, for reporting cases of ill-treatment.

Equal recognition before the law (art. 12)

Reply to paragraph 16

65. Article 17 of the Basic Law of the State reads: "All citizens are equal before the law and in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, confession, domicile or social status." The Civil Transactions Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 29/2013, reconfirms that same principle; i.e., equality in civil matters. Persons with disabilities enjoy equal legal capacity and they are equal in respect of age of legal capacity and the provisions and legal dispositions relating thereto. Article 41 of the Civil Transactions Act, which defines the age of legal capacity, states as follows: "Persons who attain the age of majority, possess their intellectual faculties and are under no impediment shall have full capacity to exercise their civil rights." The age of legal majority is 18.

66. The law does not, then, discriminate between men and women regarding civil capacity and legal dispositions, as defined in the Civil Transactions Act. There are no gender-related bars to capacity and the bars to capacity (e.g., insanity, incompetence or a state of non compos mentis) apply to both men and women alike.

67. No legislation and no law places any limit on the legal capacity of persons with disabilities as defined in the above-mentioned Civil Transactions Act and in the Trade Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 55/90. Neither of those two Acts distinguishes between

the civil capacity of persons with disabilities to make civil dispositions and their capacity to pursue commercial activities as set forth in the Trade Act. Consequently, any instructions or internal regulations that require the presence of the guardian of a person with a disability in order to complete a commercial transaction would undoubtedly constitute a violation of the law.

68. The Basic Law of the State establishes that citizens have the right to choose the work that suits them, just as it establishes the right to work and to stipulate contracts of employment. Article 12 of the Basic Law provides as follows: "The State enacts laws to protect the employee and the employer and regulate relations between them. All citizens have the right to engage in the work of their choice within the limits of the law. It is not permitted to impose compulsory labour upon anyone save in accordance with the law and for the performance of public service, and for a fair wage." On that basis, the Labour Code guarantees equality between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons vis-à-vis jobs and contracts of employment, without distinction of any kind.

69. Court interpreters are provided for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing to help them convey information and follow discussions or proceedings, in cases that concern them or in countersuits.

70. Via the Oman Human Rights Commission, lawyers are provided to assist persons with disabilities in court. In cases concerning the Ministry of Social Development, the lawyers involved are on the staff of the Ministry.

71. Moreover, "children with disabilities shall enjoy all the rights under this Act without discrimination on the grounds of their disability".

Access to justice (art. 13)

Reply to paragraph 17

72. Article 25 of the Basic Law of the State provides: "The right to take legal action is safeguarded and guaranteed for all people. The law defines the procedures and circumstances required for the exercise of that right and the State guarantees, as far as possible, to make judicial offices accessible to the litigants and to settle cases promptly." Thus the Basic Law guarantees the right of recourse to law irrespective of whether or not a person has a disability. In addition, the Ministry of Justice issued Ministerial Decree No. 91/2009, which regulates legal aid for indigent persons. The Decree exempts them from payment of judicial fees, provides for the appointment of a lawyer to plead their case and defend their rights, and releases them from the obligation of paying judicial announcement publication fees and experts' expenses.

73. Between 9 and 13 April 2017, the Ministry of Social Development held a workshop on "activating the State's administrative apparatus in the interests of persons with disabilities". The workshop — which took place in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Oman ratified under Royal Decree No. 121/2008 — was held in coordination with government departments, including offices of the judiciary, and served to identify, analyse and document disability data at a national level. One of the important outcomes of the workshop was that reports on the implementation of the Convention are now periodically submitted to the National Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities in order to discuss challenges and find appropriate solutions.

74. The Ministry of Social Development organized a series of workshops in collaboration with the Muscat office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to make the Convention better known in a number of the country's governorates. All relevant departments and associations were involved in the initiative, including offices of the judiciary.

Liberty and security of the person (art. 14)

Reply to paragraph 18

75. Oman is eager to provide means of redress for persons with disabilities, without discrimination on the grounds of their disability. According to the data available in the statistical system of the Ministry of Health, between January 2013 and December 2016, Al-Masarra Hospital, which is the national institution specializing in cases of persons with intellectual disabilities, admitted 1,305 confirmed cases and 551 potential cases (annex 4).

Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 15)

Reply to paragraph 19

76. Article 56 of the Children's Act prohibits all acts of violence against children, which it specifies under eight headings, as follows: abduction; rape or sexual assault; use of children in prostitution; incitement of children to engage in sexual acts, filming them doing so or photographing their sexual organs; publication or screening of pornographic material harmful to children; use of children in the slave trade or subjecting them to forced labour; smuggling of children; and the practice of any form of violence against a child. In cases of aggression against a child, the Public Prosecution Service investigates the reported incident and issues the necessary orders for the child's medical examination, treatment and custody. Persons accused in such cases are charged with the offence of "practising any form of violence against a child" under the provisions of article 56 (h) of the Children's Act. They are liable to a term of imprisonment of between 5 and 15 years and a fine of between RO 500 and RO 1,000. The child protection committees monitor the procedural measures taken in respect of the child and the persons accused.

77. The Children's Act also guarantees the rights of children with disabilities who, in point of fact, enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Act without discrimination on the grounds of their disability. Other rights are covered under the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 63/2008. The treatment and criminal responsibility of children who are delinquent or exposed to delinquency are regulated under the Act on Juvenile Accountability. With regard to protection measures, a number of activities are prohibited under the Children's Act. They include:

- Enforcedly recruiting children into the armed forces or armed groups, or directly involving them in combat activities;
- Abducting or selling children; removing their organs; raping, sexually assaulting or sexually harassing children; driving or coercing children to participate in any form of sexual activity; exploiting children in prostitution or other sexual acts; involving children in pornography;
- Employing children in the slave trade, subjecting them to serfdom or forced labour;
- Selling tobacco, alcohol or psychotropic substances to children, or exploiting children in places where such products are manufactured, sold or advertised.

78. There are departments within the Ministry of Education dedicated to dealing with abuse in State-run schools, also through the implementation of special education programmes. The departments work to raise awareness in society about the importance of reporting cases of abuse and provide information about how to do so. Special operational manuals have been developed to provide guidance in cases of abuse while the five-year plan incorporates a number of training programmes on capacity-building and dealing with potential cases of abuse.

Reply to paragraph 20

79. There were no cases of abuse against Omani or non-Omani children in 2013. In 2014, there was one case of abuse against a girl with a hearing disability. In 2016, two children with disabilities — one with a hearing disability and the other with an intellectual disability — suffered abuse.

80. With a view to implementing monitoring mechanisms, ensuring effective and enforceable remedies and imposing penalties on perpetrators, an e-service grievance submission system has been set up on the website of the Ministry of Social Development. The system exists to receive enquiries and complaints from citizens and residents who are guardians of persons with disabilities or from persons with disabilities themselves who have suffered violence, ill-treatment or threats of any kind. The website, which includes links to the competent agencies, provides possible options for resolving the person's problem, helps to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities by reducing the risk of abuse or neglect and facilitates rehabilitation and reinsertion into society.

81. Oman has adopted measures to provide accessible services for persons with disabilities who are exposed to violence, including a series of training programmes on social guidance during the academic year 2013/14. The training focused on such topics as protecting children from abuse, modern methods of student care, and school mentoring and counselling programmes.

Living independently and being included in the community (art. 19)

Reply to paragraph 21

82. The Ministry of Social Development provides financial support services for persons with disabilities and pays out a social security pension in 19,680 such cases. Furthermore, the Ministry has issued a disability card to 36,055 individuals registered in the disability database. Card holders are able to benefit from a number of privileges and concessions such as disabled parking spaces and exemption from registration fees for treatment in health centres and hospitals. Civil society organizations, such as disability associations, and private-sector companies complement the Ministry's efforts to provide social and financial support for persons with disabilities by helping them find and furnish appropriate housing. The Ministry of Housing, working with the Ministry of Social Development, provides social housing to persons with disabilities, dispensing them from the obligation of applying to receive a plot of land or to build a home for their family. The Ministry also provides accessible mortgages and runs small and medium-sized income-generating projects through the Al-Raffd Fund. Thus far 68 persons have benefited from the support of the Fund (annex 5).

Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information (art. 21)

Reply to paragraph 22

83. Between 2013 and 2017, with a view to recognizing sign language as an official language of deaf persons and using it in official matters, the Ministry of Social Development provided administrative and financial support for sign-language training programmes, including the following:

- The "Understand Me" Programme, which involved 12 secondary-level sign-language training sessions divided into four stages and held across various regions and governorates of Oman. Four hundred participants from the State and private sectors, as well as family members of persons with disabilities, took part in the initiative;
- The Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Impairments, which was established on 5 August 2013;
- A primary- and secondary-level sign-language training course, which was imparted to 20 officials of Royal Court Affairs;
- A primary-level sign-language training course, which was imparted to 15 officials of the Directorate General for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities;
- The second stage of the "Understand Me" Programme, which focused on the formation of sign-language interpreters and was aimed at sign-language practitioners and other interested parties throughout the country;

- A primary-level sign-language training course, which was imparted to 15 members of a deaf persons' club in the governorate of Al-Buraimi;
- A primary-level sign-language workshop for officials at centres run by the Directorate General for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities. The workshop marked the occasion of the forty-second Arab Deafness Week, which had the slogan: "Signing is an important aid to communication with persons who are deaf".

84. Most institutions in the government and some in the private sector also use sign language for official business.

Education (art. 24)

Reply to paragraph 23

85. The Ministry of Education provides training courses to promote inclusive education through five-year plans that incorporate a number of indicators. One of the courses focused on opening the way to the integration within the governorates for persons with hearing or intellectual disabilities or autism.

86. The budget allocated for the training of teachers involved in educating students with hearing, sight or intellectual disabilities, both in specialized schools and in schools that apply the integration programmes, stands at around RO 17,352 annually. In addition, a budget of RO 24,000 is allocated to cover the special teaching aids, which the schools need for their students (annex 6).

87. The Council for Education has issued a booklet entitled "The Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman", one of a number of educational support publications it produced in the course of 2017. The secretariat of the Council intended the booklet to become a reference document for the development of education policy and a stimulus for the ongoing improvement of education, at all levels and of all kinds. Of the 10 sources for education identified in the booklet, the ninth refers to international treaties and covenants, thereby underlining the importance of global principles and standards. The booklet itself lists 16 principles. Of these, number 5 emphasizes the importance of education in human rights and duties, also with a view to raising awareness about the needs of persons with disabilities and the importance of respecting them and dealing with them in a positive manner.

88. Under article 36 of The Children's Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, education is provided free of charge in State-run schools until the completion of the post-primary stage. The article also makes education obligatory up to the primary level and makes the parent or guardian responsible for enrolling children in school, ensuring their regular attendance and preventing them from dropping out. Article 70 of the Act stipulates the punishment parents or guardians may face if they fail to comply with the requirements of compulsory education.

89. Educational services:

- There are specialized schools for three disabilities (hearing, sight and intellectual disabilities) in the governorate of Muscat;
- Integration programmes and learning difficulties programmes are in operation in various educational districts to accommodate persons with hearing or intellectual disabilities.

90. Statistics and databases:

- A database is being set up of students with disabilities — intellectual and hearing disabilities, learning difficulties or speech and communications difficulties — who are enrolled in special educational programmes or in integrated schools for persons with learning difficulties in the governorates, and the numbers of teachers who educate them.

91. Assessment and diagnosis:

- Children are diagnosed to be identified as candidates for special educational services and integration programmes in the educational districts.

92. Training of Omani staff:

- Centralized specialist training courses take place in Muscat and non-centralized courses in the educational districts as part of a professional development plan that covers both educational and administrative bodies;
- A high-level diploma on learning difficulties is taught at the Sultan Qaboos University.

93. Support services:

- Treatment for speech and communications difficulties is available for students with hearing or intellectual difficulties in all governorates;
- A number of hearing aids are available thanks to contributions from abroad;
- School buses are on hand to transport children with disabilities who have no one to accompany them.

94. Awareness-raising and the role of the media:

- Programmes to raise awareness about special education are on offer for different sectors within school or local communities, in a number of educational districts;
- The Ministry of Education and the media work together to highlight the gifts and abilities of students with disabilities, running activities in special education schools and organizing exhibitions.

Reply to paragraph 23

95. A total of 1,570 children with disabilities were enrolled in ordinary schools during the academic year 2013/14. In the academic year 2014/15, that figure stood at 1,659; in 2015/16 at 1,675 and in 2016/17 at 1,750 (annex 6).

96. In addition, the Ministry of Education provides appropriate educational services for students with learning difficulties within primary schools, rather than transferring them to special schools. The implementation of this programme began in two schools in the south of the governorate of Al-Batinah in 2000. It was later extended and was being applied in 611 schools in 2013 and in 608 in 2016.

97. In reference to discrimination against children with disabilities in such schools and the measures taken to ensure that they are being treated with dignity and respect and are benefiting from effective school inclusion programmes, the Ministry of Education has distributed a circular on the prohibition of beatings and corporal punishment in schools, specifying the rules and procedures to be followed in cases involving corporal punishment by teachers. An electronic counselling kit has been developed for sociologists comprising a "Class Mentoring Guide", a "Guide on Ways to Respond to Emotions" and a "Practical Sociological Guide".

Health (art. 25)

Reply to paragraph 25

98. The Ministry of Health acts to raise awareness among persons with disabilities on matters affecting their health, organizing educational programmes in various health-related areas that have an important impact on the development and implementation of preventive, curative and rehabilitative standards within the Ministry's health-care institutions.

- (1) Prevention:
    - Vaccination against diseases that can cause disability, such as poliomyelitis;

- Advanced screening services for pregnant women for the early detection of congenital deformations, and prompt intervention;
- Intensive campaigns to reduce injuries arising from road accidents;
- Premarital screening programme to avoid hereditary diseases;
- Neonatal screening for the early detection of hearing disabilities;
- Genetic guidance services for families with a history of disability;
- A mental health programme and rehabilitation for psychological and intellectual disabilities resulting from addiction;
- Periodic screening of school students (in classes 1 to 7).

• (2) Treatment and services:

- Physiotherapy, prosthetics, cochlear implants, eye surgery (cataract operations) to correct visual disabilities, speech therapy, treatment of injuries resulting from accidents to prevent motorial disabilities.

99. The Ministry of Health has always laid great emphasis on health-awareness programmes. From the outset, it made education an important and integral part of its health services and programmes, integrating it as a fundamental health priority. Health-awareness programmes also focus on persons with disabilities, in which context the Ministry's Health Education and Information Department has carried out educational initiatives in a number of fields, with the purpose of raising awareness among such persons.

100. The General Department of the Ministry of Health has inaugurated a communications centre that covers all the Ministry's health services. The centre will help to identify recurring problems and find solutions to them, improve cultural health awareness in society, canvas the views citizens and residents of Oman have about health care, and maintain constant communication between the Ministry and the community.

101. Oman provides persons with disabilities with appropriate health-care services free of charge and in all governorates, on an equal footing with others.

102. The Ministry of Health promotes health surveys in order to gain a clear view of the existing situation and to help formulate plans and strategies for the future. The national health survey conducted in 2008 to determine the extent of knowledge of and trends in congenital malformations and hereditary disorders among 4,525 Omani households showed that around 50 per cent of the participants in the survey had bonds of kinship before marriage. Moreover, 74 per cent of respondents of both sexes expressed the belief that consanguineous marriages and hereditary diseases were among the principal causes of congenital malformations. In fact, the few studies that have been carried out point to a close link between consanguineous marriages and congenital malformations such as neurological and hearing impairments in children.

103. As stated earlier, Oman guarantees access to health services for all persons with disabilities, without discrimination, in all governorates and regions. Since 1976, the Ministry of Health has been formulating five-year plans for the development of health services. During the first phase, these plans focused on horizontal expansion of the health-service infrastructure in order to ensure equitable distribution in all governorates. During the second phase, which began in the 1980s, there was a trend towards developing the quality of services in order to make them more inclusive and ensure that they covered all aspects of care: promotion, prevention, cure and rehabilitation. Thematic programmes targeting major health problems and vulnerable categories were designed and implemented, such as the expanded vaccination programme, the maternal and childcare programme, programmes to combat diarrhoea and respiratory diseases, etc. The management of health services was decentralized and focus turned to how to treat new types of diseases resulting from the shift to a modern lifestyle and the changing demographic structure. As a result, health departments in the governorates have become of crucial importance in view of their fundamental role as service providers and first responders to the needs of individuals. The ninth five-year plan (2016–2020) includes provision for a special department dedicated to

persons with disabilities. The department, known as the Disability Programmes Department, will be responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring plans.

Work and employment (art. 27)

Reply to paragraph 26

104. In 2016, there were 657 Omani persons with disabilities working in the government sector.

- They account for 0.34 per cent of all Omanis employed in the government sector;
- Males make up the majority of persons with disabilities working in the government sector, accounting for 90 per cent of the total while women account for 10 per cent;
- There is great disparity in the numbers of men and of women working in government service as, irrespective of disability, the numbers of men are much greater;
- The disability of 48 per cent of the persons with disabilities who work in the government sector affects their ability to walk or to climb steps;
- The number of persons with disabilities of both sexes working in the civil service in government departments grew from 433 in 2013 to 519 in 2016, an increase of 19.9 per cent;
- Every year, it is the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources that employs the largest proportion of persons with disabilities (annex 7).

105. There are 1,190 Omani persons with disabilities working in the private sector.

- They account for 0.5 per cent of all Omanis employed in the private sector;
- Males make up 86.6 per cent of all persons with disabilities working in the private sector, while women make up 13.4 per cent;
- Forty-five per cent of the persons with disabilities who work in the private sector are affected with Down syndrome;
- The under-25 age group saw the biggest expansion during 2016, up by 29.2 per cent, while the over-40 age group went down during the same period by 20.3 per cent;
- In 2016, around two thirds of the private-sector workforce with disabilities was employed in the governorates of Muscat, northern Al-Batinah and Al-Dakhiliyah. The biggest rise was registered in the governorate of Muscat — 15.1 per cent — and the biggest fall in the governorate of Al-Buraimi — 36.4 per cent;
- The indicator relative to the number of persons with disabilities at all levels of education fell by 3.9 per cent in 2016; the vast majority of such persons hold a general education diploma or less;
- Table 5 shows that 45.2 per cent of the national workforce with disabilities in private-sector facilities are affected by Down syndrome, they are followed by persons who have epilepsy who account for 24.5 per cent of the total. The growth in numbers is due to changes regarding workers with disabilities introduced by the Public Authority for the Manpower Register;
- Table 6 shows the decline of the national workforce with disabilities at all skill levels during 2016, with the exception of unskilled workers who registered a slight increase of 0.5 per cent. In general terms, up to the end of 2016, more than three quarters — 75.7 per cent — were semi-skilled or unskilled workers, both of which categories saw a fall in their numbers; they were followed by skilled workers (12.7 per cent), then by specialized workers (6.6 per cent) while technical workers represented the smallest proportion at 5 per cent of the total;
- Table 7 shows the numbers of the national workforce with disabilities in private-sector facilities according to professional category. During the period 2015–2016, clerical and service professions made up more than half of the total. This is due to

the fact that such professions are compatible with the nature of disabilities within the national workforce. Professions in agriculture, livestock and poultry farming, and fishing saw the biggest increase — 66.7 per cent — while directors of public offices, business and investors saw the biggest drop — 40.5 per cent;

- Table 8 shows how the national workforce with disabilities in the private sector is divided according to profession, with guards, clerical workers and porters accounting for 275 workers or 23.1 per cent of the total for 2016. This reflects their distribution according to professional category where the emphasis is on clerical and service professions. The profession of administrative clerk saw the biggest increase — 34.8 per cent.

106. Measures have been taken to integrate persons with disabilities into professional training centres and into the Fishermen's Training Institutes via a training programme for persons with hearing impairments and minor motorial disabilities. Graduates from the training programme are then employed in the specialized fields for which they have been prepared and follow-up measures are taken to ensure that they are adequately integrated and their potential is maximized to the full.

107. Persons with disabilities are able to progress to positions of leadership; they are assigned oversight roles and afforded opportunities for capacity-development. They are also able to participate in international, regional and local forums and conferences and they enjoy equality in pay scales and professional rankings, as per the Civil Service Act. Social security pensions are paid without discrimination and holiday entitlements are equal.

108. Indicators relative to the national workforce with disabilities in private-sector facilities fell by 4 per cent in 2016 with respect to 2015. The total number stood at 1,190, divided as follows:

- 1,030 males, 86.6 per cent;
- 160 females, 13.4 per cent.

109. As regards the composition of the Committee for Training and Employing Persons with Disabilities and the Subcommittee for Rehabilitation, Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, a joint commission of the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Social Development was created pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 190/2016, dated 19 June 2016, issued by the Minister of Manpower. The commission, which supervises plans for the integration of persons with disabilities into professional training centres, the Fishermen's Training Institutes and on-the-job training, has the following responsibilities (annex 7):

- Formulating and promoting labour-market integration policies and finding suitable employment opportunities in the sector;
- Reviewing and discussing all matters relating to comprehensive integration in existing legislation and promoting the amendments and additions that need to be made by the competent authorities;
- Monitoring progress, assessing challenges and providing guidance on the proposals, recommendations and requirements of the follow-up team, the professional training centres and the Fishermen's Training Institutes;
- Developing habilitation and training standards, and adapting curricula and training schedules for use in centres and institutions, in order to bring them into line with the capacities of persons with disabilities and the needs of the labour market;
- Harmonizing cooperation on services for persons with intellectual disabilities between the Vocational Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre and the Wafa Centres run by the Ministry of Social Development and the institutes run by the Ministry of Manpower;
- Expanding community partnership with government institutions and the private sector in the areas of on-the-job training, the employment of persons with disabilities and accessibility;

- Undertaking studies and developing joint cooperation plans between the two ministries.

110. The Deputy Minister of Manpower issued Administrative Decree No. 25/2017, dated 23 March 2017, regarding technical education and vocational training. The Decree includes provision for the formation of a joint technical team between the two ministries headed by the Director General of the Ministry of Manpower's Directorate General for Vocational Training. The team has the following responsibilities:

- Formulating an action plan to train and employ persons with disabilities in State-run centres and institutes as well as in private training institutes, with funding from private-sector institutions;
- Monitoring employment and training programmes;
- Examining the obstacles and challenges affecting the conduct of training and finding appropriate solutions;
- Developing and enhancing habilitation and training programmes to accommodate different kinds of disability;
- Proposing programmes and fields of specialization that reflect the requirements of the labour market;
- Building partnerships with various media outlets in order to make society aware of the rights of persons with disabilities with a view to opening opportunities for training and employment, and facilitating access;
- Coordinating with relevant bodies in order to ensure the success and enhancement of the programme;
- Identifying category-one private training institutes where training could be carried out, and coordinating with private sector institutions.

Adequate standard of living and social protection (art. 28)

Reply to paragraph 27

111. The Ministry of Social Development serves parents with disabilities by giving them financial support in the form of a social security pension and supporting their children. It also helps them by providing a domestic worker and underwriting his or her wages if the family itself has no income. Civil society organizations, such as disability associations, and private-sector companies complement the Ministry's efforts to provide social and financial support for persons with disabilities by helping them find and furnish appropriate housing. The Ministry of Housing, working with the Ministry of Social Development, provides social housing to persons with disabilities, dispensing them from the obligation of applying to receive a plot of land or to build a home for themselves. In cases where a father or mother is affected by a serious disability, a legal representative, a neighbour or a relative is assigned to care for the children and to communicate with the Ministry.

Participation in political and public life (art. 29)

Reply to paragraph 28

112. In 2011, amendments concerning the legislative and oversight prerogatives of the Council of Oman (the State Council and the Consultative Council) were introduced into the Basic Law of the State, which enshrines the rights of citizens to participate in elections and to present themselves as candidates to the Consultative Council. The Consultative Council Elections Act, issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. 58/2013, makes no distinction between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons as regards voting or standing for the Council. Article 51 of the Act states as follows: "A member of the electoral committee shall be assigned to assist voters who are illiterate or unable to cast a ballot. This shall take place by placing a mark in the designated field next to the name of the candidate selected by the voter while another member of the committee recites the name of the candidate chosen, after which the form is handed over for placement in the ballot box."

113. The norms applied in elections to the Consultative Council are also applied in elections to municipal councils.

114. Article 23 of the Consultative Council Elections Act states: "All citizens may apply to be entered into the electoral register if the following conditions are fulfilled:

- They are least 21 years old on 1 January of the year in which the elections take place, according to the information on their identity card;
- They originate from the region concerned or resident therein;
- They are not a member of the security or military forces."

115. One of the measures taken to facilitate the exercise of the right to vote by persons with disabilities was the creation of a joint working group of the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of the Interior in 2015. The working group develops standards intended to facilitate the right to vote for persons with disabilities and to enable them to cast their ballots secretly and easily. Among the elements proposed for those standards, the following are the most important:

- Special parking places for persons with disabilities near the entrance of the polling place;
- Entranceways and corridors within the polling place that can accommodate the requirements of various kinds of disability, and facilities for the entry and movement of voters with disabilities;
- Adequately equipped health facilities for persons with disabilities;
- Polling stations equipped to facilitate the free and easy entry and movement of persons with disabilities; guaranteed secrecy when casting ballots by due placement of tables, which must be adequately equipped, distanced and isolated from one another;
- Signs to guide voters, also using sign language and Braille;
- Trained and qualified assistants to provide assistance to persons with disabilities who might need it;
- Sufficient information about candidates in a format appropriate to different kinds of disability, such as Braille and sign language as well as all electronic means;
- Provision of training to directors of electoral committees and their assistants — also by instructing them in sign language and Braille — to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Information, announcements and media coverage about the electoral process, from beginning to end, in formats accessible to persons with disabilities.

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (art. 30)

Reply to paragraph 29

116. The bodies responsible for following up on human-rights-related issues periodically review international treaties and agreements, and consider the possibility of acceding thereto. Those bodies seek to lay the foundations and launch the preliminary processes for accession to treaties, before such accession can take place.

117. The Oman Paralympic Committee came into being on 14 July 2010 pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 16/2010. The Committee, which is under the Ministry of Sport, serves to promote the sporting achievements of persons with disabilities and to give them greater prominence in order to take advantage of the popularity that form of sport is currently enjoying. The Committee has the following roles:

- Developing plans and programmes for the diffusion of disabled sports and organizing championships and competitions;

- Making sporting selections at the national level and establishing technical and administrative bodies;
- Representing Oman at international conferences and sporting events for persons with disabilities;
- Combating the use of steroids, in coordination with the Oman Anti-Doping Committee;
- Honouring competitors who win medals in foreign competitions;
- Building sports facilities (a process that is currently under way).

118. Under Ministerial Decree No. 54/2016, the Ministry of Social Development established the Oman Special Olympiad Committee, which formulates plans, programmes, policies and services for persons with intellectual disabilities and seeks to habilitate them, develop their capacities and energies, and integrate them into society through sporting activities and participation in events and competitions at local, regional and international level. During the course of 2014, 964 sportspersons from Oman participated in a number of different events and activities (annex 8).

C. Specific obligations (arts. 31–33)

Statistics and data collection (art. 31)

Reply to paragraph 30

119. Oman is currently preparing for the general population census of 2020. The census is to be carried out electronically on the basis of national records adopted by the high committee for the 2020 census. Those records include the Ministry of Social Development's electronic system for registering persons with disabilities. All stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental (charitable organizations working in the field of disability) will be involved in the mechanisms for collecting and monitoring the data. The census will focus on existing information as well as on information stakeholders desire to have in order to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. That information can then be inserted into the electronic disability database of the Ministry of Social Development.

120. Existing national records — such as the civil register of the Royal Oman Police, the manpower register and the registers of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and others — will be linked to the disability database of the Ministry of Social Development in order to facilitate the exchange of information relative to persons with disabilities.

121. The Ministry of Social Development has included the creation of a national information register on persons with disabilities as one of its goals relative to the rights of persons with disabilities within the Social Action Strategy 2016–2025. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have been afforded the opportunity to participate at various stages of the Strategy, including that relative to the national register.

122. Oman used the short questions of disability recommended by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics in the census of 2003 and in that of 2010. Those questions are in line with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and they make it possible to establish international comparisons and to meet the requirements of the Convention.

123. The administrators of the census have chosen to include the following question: "Does the individual have any difficulty in the conduct of his or her daily life? 1. Yes. 2. No." Their intention is to facilitate the gathering of data and to ensure that disability-related questions are posed only to persons who effectively face difficulties. The questions are as follows:

(a) Does the individual have any difficulty in the conduct of his or her daily life?

1. Yes. 2. No.

(b) Types of difficulty/disability:

Difficulties/disabilities in the conduct of daily life that may affect certain individuals fall into seven categories:

1. Difficulties in seeing, even if wearing glasses;

   Complete inability to see, or difficulties in seeing, even if wearing glasses;

2. Difficulties in hearing, even if wearing a hearing aid;

   Complete inability to hear, or difficulties in hearing, even if wearing a hearing aid;

3. Difficulties in walking or climbing steps;

   Inability to walk or to climb steps, even if using an assistive device;

4. Difficulties in remembering or concentrating;

   Inability to remember, concentrate or make decisions, or difficulties therein;

5. Difficulties in taking care of oneself;

   Inability to wash, feed or dress oneself, or difficulties therein;

6. Difficulties in communicating in normal language;

   Difficulties in communicating with others or making others understand through the use of normal language;

7. Difficulties in moving the upper part of the body;

   Complete inability to move upper parts of the body, such as the hands, or difficulties in bending and kneeling (performing ritual prayer).

(c) The answers to these questions have been classified as follows:

No difficulty

Some difficulty

Complete inability

(d) The principle cause of the difficulty/disability:

The principle causes of difficulties/disabilities have been classified as follows:

1. Genetic factors
2. Illness
3. Road accident
4. Workplace accident
5. Advanced age
6. Other

National implementation and monitoring (art. 33)

Reply to paragraph 31

124. An "activation" programme has been rolled out which concerns the role of the administrative offices of State towards persons with disabilities, in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One of the principal goals of the programme is to designate focal points in governmental and non-governmental organizations for the implementation of the Convention.

125. As regards the establishment of an independent monitoring framework, on 2 March 2015 the Ministry of Social Development signed a memorandum of understanding with the Oman Human Rights Commission. Under the memorandum, the monitoring mechanism for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to be transferred to the Commission (annex 9).